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A  
LETTER

TO SCRIPTURISTA;

CONTAINING

SOME REMARKS

ON HIS

Answer to *Paulinus's* three Questions :

WHEREIN

The Nature of a *Test of Orthodoxy* is exactly stated; the Church's Right to know and judge of the religious Principles of those who are admitted to sealing Ordinances, and reject the Erroneous, is asserted; and the Practice of our Churches in *New-England*, from their first Settlement in this Country, vindicated.

AND ALSO

Three QUESTIONS more,

Relative to the *new Way* of taking Persons into the Church, lately introduced at *Wallingford*, by Mr. *Dana*, stated: with a Desire they may be answered by *Scripturista*, in his next Letter to his Friend *Paulinus*,

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--- He that believeth ---

Mark, xvi. 15, 16.

If thou believest with all thine Heart, thou mayest.

Acts. viii. 37.

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NEW-HAVEN: Printed 1760.

BOSTON: Re-printed and Sold by S. KNEELAND, in Queen-street, 1761.





## A LETTER to SCRIPTURISTA.

S I R,

FROM the first settling of *New-England*, it has been the constant practice of all our *congregational churches*, to require a public assent to the chief articles of the christian faith, as a *term of communion* in special ordinances. Nor is there, to this day, one such church, or to be sure not above one, that ever I heard of, but what insists upon such a public assent, as that, without which, they will not admit any to sealing ordinances. Our churches have *Formula's*, which they call *the doctrines of faith*, or *the articles of the christian faith*. The minister publicly reads them to such as are to be taken into full communion; and they give their assent to them before all the congregation. For our churches believe (and act upon it) that none ought to be admitted to full communion, but such as are found in the faith; and that the church has a right to judge of their soundness in the faith: and they do judge those to be sound in the faith, who publicly profess (acting, to a judgment of charity, *understandingly* and *honestly*) their assent to the articles of the christian faith, which they have agreed to, and drawn up, to be used in the admission of members; As they are persuaded, said articles do express the true sense of the holy scriptures.

Were they convinced, that any of *their articles* were contrary to scripture, I know not of one, or to be sure not above one, of all our churches, but would immediately *alter* their articles. For we all profess, that the *bible* is the *only standard*, by which our religious sentiments are to be formed; and we mean, by our creeds and confessions,

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only to express *our sense* of scripture : Not to make a *new bible* ; but only to express how we understand *the bible*, that *God has already made*. And this, to the end, that others may know our principles, and we know their's.

When therefore a number of ministers, and of private gentlemen, who belong to our churches, have in late years appeared so very zealous against *creeds* and *confessions*, as tests of orthodoxy ; I was at a loss to know what they meant, and what they designed, and what alteration they would have in our customs and practices, if they could new model things just to their minds. --- Would they have men admitted into the church, and appointed public instructors, *without any regard to their religious principles* ? Or, do they not like it, that our articles *should be writ down* ? Or, would they have *new creeds* drawn up *contrary, to our present*, and *imposed* on our churches, and our churches *not allowed to judge for themselves* ! Or, what do they mean ? And what would they have ?

Thus stood the case in my view, when, two or three years ago, hearing that something new was about to be published *against creeds and confessions*, by a certain ingenious gentleman, I sent the following lines to the printer of the *Connecticut Gazette*, which he was so good as to give a place in his paper, No. 149.

‘ *To the Printer,* ’ &c.

‘ As several pieces of late have been published against creeds and confessions of human composition being used as tests of orthodoxy, which are thought not fully to reach the merits of the cause ; It is desired, that in the next piece of that nature, the following questions may be answered.

‘ QUEST. I. Is it of any importance, what men's principles be, if their lives are but good ? For if it is not, then not their religious principles, but only their external conduct, need be inquired into ; and they may be admitted to sealing ordinances in the church of Christ, or be licensed to preach, and ordained to the work of  
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the ministry, or be employed as presidents, fellows, and tutors, to take care of the education of our youth, whether they are orthodox, or not. And so there will be no need of any tests of orthodoxy, human or divine.

But if it be of importance, that they should be sound in the faith, and if their religious principles must be inquired into; then it is inquired,

QUEST. II. Whether particular christian communities, as well as particular persons, have not a right to judge for themselves, what is the true sense of scripture, and what principles are necessary, according to the holy scriptures, to be believed and professed, in order to an admission to sealing ordinances, or to be employed as public instructors?

For if particular communities have not a right to judge for themselves, they ought no longer to claim it.—But if they may not judge for themselves, who shall judge for them? Shall all the various sects among protestants go back to the pope to be set right? But if it be granted, that particular communities have a right to judge for themselves, it is inquired,

QUEST. III. Why they may not manifest, what is their sense of scripture, in writing, as well as by word of mouth? *i. e.* Why they may not compose a written confession of faith, to be used as a test of orthodoxy.

Till a good answer to these questions can be given, it is not to be expected, that the use of creeds and confessions

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\* A *test* is that by which we try something, to discover what it is. The bible is the *test*, by which we try *doctrines*, to discover whether they be *divine truths*. A *confession of faith* is a *test*, by which we try *those* who offer to be of our communion, &c. to discover whether *they* are *orthodox*, *i. e.* whether they believe those doctrines which we judge true, and necessary to be professed, in order to be admitted to communion, &c. In this latter sense only is it, that the christian church ever maintained, that *confessions* of human composition might be used, as *tests of orthodoxy*.—See Professor Dunlop, on creeds and confessions.

ons should be laid aside. And they are proposed to the public with a desire they may be answered, with that seriousness and good nature, with which all religious controversies ought to be managed. And such an answer shall be attended to, with an honest desire to know the truth, by  
*Paulinus.*

‘ *Decem. 24, 1757.*’

And now after above two years to consider of the matter, you, my good friend *Scripturista*, have been so kind as to give a public answer to my *three questions*. For which (altho’ you have misunderstood me in a very material point) I return you my public thanks : And if you speak not only your own sense, but the sense of your whole party, I humbly conceive we are not so far apart in this particular controversy, but that it may pretty easily be settled, to the satisfaction of all concerned. For, if I understand you right, you have granted the whole I designed ; and disputed against a point, which no denomination of Christians ever maintained : Before none in *New-England*. For,

I. You not only grant, but contend earnestly for what we all lay down as our first principle, and fundamental maxim, viz. That not creeds, nor confessions, but *the scriptures of the old and new testament are the only rule of faith* ; by which we are, each one for our selves, to be determined what to believe in matters of religion ; and to which the final appeal is to be made by all denominations of christians ; and by which they ought to decide all their religious controversies. Our creeds are to express nothing but what we verily believe to be the true sense of scripture. And if any think, we mistake the true sense of scripture, the dispute is to be decided, not by our creeds, but by the scripture ; comparing scripture with scripture. So saith our *platform* ; and this we are fully agreed in. ‘ The smallest grain of an *inspired testimony*,’ says *Professor Dunlop*, in his piece on creeds and confessions, ‘ is momentous enough, in a just ballance, to weigh down a cart-load of human canons and confessions.’ Edit. 2. p. 78.

II. You

II. You grant, 'that some of the principles of religion are so important, that none ought to be admitted to sealing ordinances, or to be employed as public instructors, who do not profess to believe them.' (p. 3.) Yea, you grant, that tho' they do at first profess to believe them, yet if afterwards it appears they do not, 'ministers ought to be silenced;' (p. 13.) and by parity of reason, church-members censured. You grant this, I say; and therefore to silence and excommunicate such, if they continue obstinate, provided it be done with a christian temper, is so far from being *persecution*, that you look upon it a *christian duty*; according to *Tit. iii. 10.*

And thus far you agree with the church of Christ in all ages of the world.

III. And you also grant fully, just as fully as I would have you, 'that particular christian communities, as well as particular persons, have a right --- not *had a right* once, ten or twenty years ago, but every day of their lives have a right 'to judge for themselves, what is the true sense of scripture; and what principles are necessary, according to the holy scriptures, to be believed and professed, in order to an admission to sealing ordinances, or to be employed as public instructors.' (p. 4.)

And if they have a right to judge for themselves, you must grant, that it is their duty to *exercise* this right, and not remain in suspense; but come to a judgment: not to be *ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth*, like those condemned by the apostle, *2 Tim. iii. 7.* But rather to believe *with all the heart*, and to *continue in the things which they have learned, and been assured of.* *ver. 14.*

Yea, how can a christian church admit any to communion, or settle a minister, until first they are agreed, what principles are orthodox and necessary? If they put off coming to a judgment, and agree upon nothing as a rule for themselves to act by, in the admission of members, or settlement of a minister, 'to be of any force till they are

are dead,' (p. 11.) then they must admit no members, and settle no ministers, till they get into the next world : Or else must admit members, and settle ministers, on this maxim, ' that it is no matter what men's principles be, if their lives are but good.' Which still you will not allow. There is an absolute necessity, therefore, upon your own principles, that christian communities settle these points, and agree, what principles are necessary, even at their first formation.

And surely a right to judge for themselves does by no means imply, that they must *never come to a judgment*, --- never be *grounded and settled* in a firm belief of all the great and important doctrines of the gospel ; but always be as *unsteady children, tost to and fro, and carried about*, like leaves in autumn, *with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive* ; for this is expressly contrary to the word of God. (Col. i. 23. Eph. iv. 14.) And equally contrary to common sense. For a *right to judge for our selves* is so far from being inconsistent with our *coming to a judgment*, that it can be of no use to us, but as it is improved to this end.

But you say, ' We must alter our belief, if afterwards we see just cause for it.' (p. 5, 11, 19.) True ; and so we must give up the bible itself, if we *see just cause for it* : And cease any longer to believe, that two and two, make four, if we *see just cause for it*. But what then ? Must we therefore never come to a judgment about the plainest and most evident matters ? Or do you think, that the great truths of the gospel cannot be clearly determined from the bible ? I hope, that *believing* the great doctrines of the gospel, *with all the heart, with a full assurance of faith, yea, with all the riches of the full assurance of understanding*, in the manner true Christians did in the apostolic age (Acts viii. 37. Col. ii. 2. 1 Thes. i. 5. Heb. x. 22.) does not appear in your eyes like a groundless confidence, a faith built on no solid, rational, lasting evidence. I hope, you would not have the minds of Christians always *fluctuating*  
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and unsettled in their belief, *like a wave of the sea*; and so, in consequence hereof, they be *unstable in all their ways*, like those condemned in *Jam. i. 6, 7, 8*. Nor can I persuade my self, that you think, a firm and persevering belief of christianity is inconsistent with the impartiality of an honest man, who is a *free inquirer* after truth: And that there is no way to be a strong believer, but by being a great bigot. If indeed you are thus far gone into scepticism, and feel your self thus at a total loss, what to believe, and what to disbelieve; I wonder not, you should be for delaying to draw up a creed for your self, lest you should soon alter your mind, and get into another scheme of religion, a scheme condemned by your former creed. But methinks, to put off 'till after death,' is too long, if you intend to be saved at last by christianity. But if it is no matter what men's principles be, if their lives are but good; all is well, whether you ever get settled in your principles, in this world, or in the world to come.

But why need I thus reason with you? For whatever sound some of your words may seem to have, and however some of your readers may understand you; yet you cannot really mean, that christians, or christian communities should delay, and put off their being settled, fully settled, in the belief of the great doctrines of the gospel. For you do expressly grant, it is of so great importance, that men be sound in the faith, that they must not be admitted to communion, or ordained to the work of the ministry, without it. Which supposes, the great truths of the gospel are so plain and evident, that they may and ought to be known and believed; and christian communities to be well settled in these things, even at their first foundation.

IV. You grant, 'That particular christian communities may manifest their sense of scripture in writing, as well as by word of mouth' (p. 5.) i. e. they may compose *creeds*. For a *creed* (which comes from *credo*, to believe) consists of a number of articles, which *I believe to be taught in the holy scriptures*. And what particular use is to be made of

of their *creed* by christian communities, you have already virtually granted.

For,

V. Altho' this clause, 'A written confession of faith to be used as a test of orthodoxy,' does 'really surprise you,' (p. 6.) taken in the *frightful sense* you have put upon it; yet taken in the sense I designed the words, it seems, you fully approve the thing. The *name*, 'a test of orthodoxy,' frights you; and no wonder, considering the *frightful* idea you put to the words: But the *thing* designed by that name, seems quite familiar to your mind. For there are some religious principles, which appear to you of so great importance, that you would neither admit to sealing ordinances, nor to the office of a public instructor, those who would not profess them. And these principles, you fully believe, are taught in the holy scriptures. So that in the sense I use words, they are your *creed*, and your *test of orthodoxy*. For you *believe* them, and insist upon the profession of them as a *term of communion*. And possibly their evidence appears to you so clear and full, that you are persuaded you never shall, and in fact you never will, alter your belief as to them. And yet you are no bigot: but rather you profess to stand ready to alter your belief, 'when you see just cause for it.' However, till then, you would join to silence and excommunicate a minister, who should be proved guilty of gross heresy, according to your notions of heresy, *i. e.* according to your *creed*, used as a *test of orthodoxy*. (p. 13.)

Yea, it is plain, you have no notion of any possible way for you to judge of your neighbour's belief, whether it be what you call orthodox, or not, but by comparing it with your *creed*, *i. e.* with what you *believe to be the true sense of scripture*. For, as you say (p. 20.) 'having settled your principles according to your understanding of scripture, you do necessarily judge of particular cases according to them, or agreeably to your own judgment of the true meaning of the scriptures.' Nor indeed, sir, has any body else any other way of judging. For there can be no other.

other. And, in fact, all parties, however they differ in their disputes, yet agree to a tittle in their conduct: They all have but one and the same way to judge of their neighbour's orthodoxy, *viz.* By comparing their neighbour's profession, with what they themselves *believe to be the true meaning of the scripture*, i. e. with their own *creed*. For we must judge by what we believe to be the true sense of scripture, or not make the scripture our rule of judgment, in any respect at all. \*

So that it is plain, that all the great zeal, loud outcries, and hot disputes against creeds and confessions being used as a test of orthodoxy, must have arisen from some misunderstanding of the case; or else men have not been honest; but rather disputed against creeds in general, merely because they hate and want to get rid of, the established creed of their country. Had it not been for this circumstance, they might have been as great friends to creeds and confessions as any of their neighbours.--- Now which of these, my friend, is the case with you? Do you hate *Calvinism*? Do you dispute against creeds, because you disbelieve our confession of faith, and want to get rid of it? *No*, you say. The man is 'guilty of scandal, who imputes any such corrupt design to you.' (p. 28.) Very well, sir;--- It remains therefore, that your dislike of creeds,

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\* The admirers of Dr. Taylor, look upon those as orthodox, who understand the scripture as he has explained it. For they esteem his writings, 'as being a just exposition of the word of God in those doctrines or articles which are contained in them.' Nor would they choose a man to instruct their children in *divinity*, who did not *judge of truth and error*, as Dr. Taylor does.--- And why should they condemn that in others, which they approve of in themselves? Or why should they desire to misrepresent it to the world, when at the same time, rightly understood, they, and all the world must agree to justify it?--- Let them confute, if they can, what we mean to maintain. Or if they know they cannot, let them own it: And not try to blacken, by misrepresentations, what they dare not but justify, rightly represented.

as tests of orthodoxy, must be founded on some mistaken notion of the thing. Which mistaken notion, were it removed, all the dislike of so orthodox, and so honest a man, would immediately cease.--- And accordingly, it is observable, that having, in your letter, granted the whole I designed, by my *three questions*, to lead gentlemen on your side, to feel they must grant, or turn scepticks, on the one hand ; or deprive particular christian communities of their right to judge for themselves, and act according to their own consciences, on the other : I say, having granted the whole I designed, you state a *question* absolutely of your own making, and set your self to dispute against a point no denomination of Christians, ever professed to maintain. To be sure, it appears to me so very absurd, that, instead of it's being espoused by almost all Christians since the reign of *Constantine the great*, as you imagine ; I very much doubt whether there ever was in any age, so much as one man of tolerable sense, that meant to hold it. You indeed insinuate that *a certain gentleman* maintains it. But I dare say, you can no sooner get him to believe it, than you can to believe, that the same thing *may be*, and *not be*, in the same sense and at the same time. And it is not fair to put a meaning to a man's words, he never intended.

VI. The *question* you dispute against, is this, ' Whether particular christian communities, having drawn up in writing, a confession of faith ; agreeable to their present judgment, of the true sense of scripture, have not just right and authority, to *impose* it on themselves, and all their members, as a test of orthodoxy, and term of communion ; and for the future use is as such ? ' (p. 6.) By the word '*impose*' you afterwards explain your self to mean, *they oblige themselves to use it as a test of orthodoxy as long as they live ; even altho' they are in fact, afterwards convinced, that it is not orthodox ; Or in other words, they bind themselves to believe profess and practice according to it, and not to alter in the least, altho' they see just cause for alteration.* (p. 11,--- 19 )

Strange

Strange notion ! *Bind themselves not to alter their belief, altho' afterwards 'they see just reason for it !'---* But if I do, in fact, *see just reason to alter my belief*, i. e. what appears to me to be *just reason*, I cannot but alter my belief. It is not in my power to believe a doctrine to be taught in scripture, while at the same time I am fully convinced, it is not taught there. And no man living ever meant to oblige himself to this. Indeed, it would be to oblige himself to an absolute contradiction ; to believe a thing *to be*, and *not to be*, in the same sense, and at the same time.--- For as I before said, 'a *creed* consists of a number of articles, which *I believe are taught in the sacred scriptures*. And therefore said articles are not *my creed* if *I do not believe that they are taught in the scripture*. But to believe they *are* taught in scripture, and to believe that they *are not* taught in scripture, at the same time, is to believe a thing *to be* and *not to be* ; which is what you must be sensible, on the least reflection, no man ever meant to do.-- If the church of *Rome* is *vain* enough to believe herself infallible ; yet she never was so absurd as professedly to oblige her self to persevere in her belief of her own infallibility, altho' in time to come she should be fully convinced of her mistake.

'They may not alter their principles' (you say, p. 11.) 'or at least their profession afterwards, tho' on further inquiry, they should think they had mistaken the sense of scripture at first.' i. e. they are obliged to proceed to *silence* a minister, or *censure* a private christian, as an *heretick*, directly against the light of their own consciences, when they are fully persuaded they are sound in the faith, the error not being in them, but in their own creeds.-- To set which notion in all its horrors, you tell a long story of a *church trial*, carried on upon this scheme, and conclude with saying, 'That if the church have a right to make a contrary judgment, if they see just reason for it,' then tests of orthodoxy must be given up. (p. 19.) So that this is the precise notion of *tests of orthodoxy*, with which you are so terribly frightened, and against which you dispute so zealously, as

having in all ages of the church been the grand source of all *imposition, tyranny, and persecution*. Altho' at the same time, it does not appear, that this notion of a *test of orthodoxy*, was ever embraced by any christian church in the world.

Among all the reformed churches, none are more zealous for creeds and confessions as tests of orthodoxy, than the church of *Scotland*. And Mr. *Dunlop*, professor of divinity in the *university of Edinburgh*, in his *preface to their confession*, who wrote to shew the *justice, reasonableness and necessity* of it, as a *PUBLIC STANDARD OF ORTHODOXY*, may be supposed to speak the common sense of that church. But he expressly saith, edit. 2. p. 143. 'According to the principles of our *confession*, every man would search after the truth with the utmost impartiality; attend to the voice of *divine revelation*, tho' it may sound very differently in his ears from the public standard of any *fallible church*.---Tis base and inglorious for any person to dessemble the truth, when he discovers it, or neglect any proper means of spreading it in the world, because he may thereby disoblige the majority and lose their favours.'--- Again, p. 147. 'As good men will never subscribe a *confession* but when persuaded in their consciences of the conformity of its articles to *divine revelation*; so they'l with courage oppose themselves to it, when convinced of their error, they'l not be afraid openly to abandon it, and will prove as zealous in promoting what they now see to be the mind of God in the *scripture*, as if there had never been such a thing as a *human creed* in the world.'--- Thus far this author, celebrated by all the friends of *creeds and confessions*, as one who has written genteelly and unanswerable.--- Read him, my good *Scripturista*, and answer him fairly, and we'll all come over to your side. For we all maintain, that we have a right to change our sentiments, 'when we see just reason for it.'

But 'till then, we ought to persevere in the truth, how much misrepresented soever it is; yea, altho' dressed up as  
*absurd*

*absurd* in it self, and the native source of almost all evil.

But since you are so orthodox and so honest a man, and apparently a man of sense, pray let me stand and wonder a little, and in my turn be 'really surprised,' how you ever came to think the *christian church in all ages* meant to espouse *tests of orthodoxy* in the sense you have charged upon them. Can you produce any history to prove that this was the case in the primitive times, or in later ages? Does *Eusebius* say so, or the celebrated *Du Pin*? Does *Sleiden*, or *Burnet*, or *Neal*, or *Bowers*, or any other historian of credit?—To be sure, so honest a man as you, would not charge so *black* and *absurd* an opinion upon the christian church in all ages, out of pure wilful malice, on purpose to bring an odium upon all the friends of *creeds*: And how a man of your good sense could possibly be guilty of so gross a mistake, is very hard to say. To attribute it to wilful malice, I cannot; to attribute it to your ignorance, I do not know how to do it. And on the whole, I am 'really surprised.' You pretend to quote but one author, and it is not only plain from his *piece*, but he expressly tells me by word of mouth, that he never meant any such thing: But if he did, how does this prove that the christian church in all ages have been in this scheme? Or what warrant had you to raise such an evil report against the church of Christ?

As to the Questions you state, p. 6, 7, 8, &c. The answer is short.—'Who have right to make *such* tests of orthodoxy?' No-body.—'What principles should be put into such tests?' None at all.—'And, who should be bound by them?' None in this world, or in the next.

But you have said so much about *imposition* and *persecution*, (p. 21,—28.) that we must stop here a few minutes, lest ignorant people should be *imposed* on. You do not mean to charge your own scheme, my good friend, with being a persecuting scheme. Nor do you think it necessary that our churches should give up their right to judge for themselves, and become indifferent to all principles, as willing to receive an *Arminian*, or *Socinian*, to communion, as an orthodox Christian:

Christian: and particularly declare that it is no matter what men's principles be, if their lives are but good: And so commence *Pagans*, † in order to avoid the dreadful guilt of *imposition* and *persecution*. Pray, my good *Scripturista*, do tell me, who acts the manly, honest part, and who the part of an *imposer* and *persecutor*?

*Aristocles* was educated in a *Socinian* church at *Siena*. One article of their faith was, that *Jesus Christ is a mere creature, who never had any existence before he was born of the Virgin Mary*. And they professed to understand all those texts of scripture which speak of his divinity, to imply no more than that he was *God by office*. — *Aristocles* at the age of *sixteen*, joined in full communion with the church, and publicly gave his assent to *their creed*. — At the age of *twenty-four*, the former minister being dead, *Aristocles* was chosen his successor, and put into possession of all their parsonage lands for life, on condition he should continue to preach the doctrines embraced by that particular church. Which, not having studied the controversy, he inadvertently engaged to do, being by the influence of education full in the *Socinian* scheme. — However, within two years after his ordination, having carefully searched the scriptures, *Aristocles* was fully convinced of his error, and became a sound believer and a good man. And having counted the cost, he came to a full resolution, at the risque of all his outward comforts, honestly to inform his church & congregation of the change of his sentiments; and to preach up the *divinity* and *satisfaction* of Christ, and endeavour to set these points in the clearest light from the holy scriptures. And at the same time

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† The *Pagans* in the apostolic age exceedingly cried out against the christian sect, for *damning* all parties but their own, i. e. for preaching as their Master had bid them, *he that believeth not shall be damned*, Mar. xvi. 16. For all the various tribes of heathen idolaters, with all their different Gods, were in full charity with one another: And so they all joined to look upon the christian sect, as unsocial and inimical to the human kind. See *Warburton's Div. Log.*

time honestly to acknowledge to his people, that he had *broken the covenant*, which, in the times of his ignorance, he had made with them ; and so forfeited all claim to the church's parsonage lands, which accordingly he resigned. ' And now, says he, if you will choose me for your minister, as I am, I am willing to serve you ; but I claim no right to IMPOSE a *Calvinist* minister upon a *Socinian* church.'— And pray, sir, did not this man act an honest part ? †

*Authades* in another part of the christian world, where *Calvinism* was the only established religion, in his youth, joined with the church where he lived ; and publickly gave his assent, according to custom, to the articles of the christian faith, as contained in their *formula*, which were strictly *Calvinistical*, altho' the church was grown very lax in *examinations*, without which, *formulas*, tho' never so good, will not answer the end. He did not believe their articles at the time, but it was for his credit to be a church-member ; therefore he kept his infidelity to himself, and made a publick profession. At length the minister, a good old *Calvinist*, died. The church & congregation invited *Authades* to be his successor. All the time he was on probation, his chief study was to conceal himself : For by this time, he began to be full in the *Socinian* scheme. He generally preached on moral subjects, as they gave him the largest scope

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† 'Did I therefore alter my notions as to *articles of faith*, which I had once subscribed, and came to perceive the falsehood of them, I would think my self obliged to follow the dictates of my own conscience.--- I would endeavour also by all due means to persuade the church, to which I belonged, to change their *faith* also :--- But if I were not able,--- it would be extremely foolish to fancy that they would act directly contrary to their own principles, in continuing me their minister, and endowing me with that salary, which they had allotted to a *pastor* that should teach them doctrines which I had found my self obliged to abandon. And it were absurd to imagine that tho' *those who serve the altar, should live by the altar*, that yet I should live by an altar which I had abandoned, set up one in opposition to, and indeed endeavoured to overthrow.' *Dunlop on creeds.* p. 91.

scope for popular declamation, and the best advantages to hide his principles. If at any time he preached on *original sin, regeneration, justification, the satisfaction of Christ, or the influences of the Holy Spirit*, as he was obliged sometimes to do, to prevent their suspicions ; he took the greatest care to express himself so, as that his secret sentiments should not be discovered by the people. However, some of the more judicious sort suspected him, and feared he meant to act a part : Nevertheless, a great majority invite him to settle, and he is ordained. He expressly covenants to preach to them according to their *calvinistic* articles of faith ; and on this condition, they engage to pay him £.100 *per annum*. He knew they would not settle him, if he did not delude them. And he still knows he cannot keep possession of the £. 100 *per annum*, unless he can keep them deluded. Therefore he uses all his art to conceal himself from the congregation in general ; and in the mean time, is equally cunning to make profelytes to the *Socinian* scheme, in a secret under-handed way. At length, having made a party, he begins to take courage ; and sily dresses up *Calvinists*, as *bigots*, and *vital piety* as *enthusiasm* ; and more openly declaims against *creeds* and *confessions*, as *impositions* and *engines of persecution*, the result of a *proud and domineering spirit* : And in a word, *the fatal source of all mischief*. For so they feel to him. For as *he that doth evil hateth the light* ; so he that he is an heretick hates orthodox creeds and confessions. Poor *Authades* ! He knows very well, that if his church and congregation could strip off his false colours, and get legal proof of his true character, he must lose his £. 100 *per annum*. He thinks it no roguery for him to *impose* upon his church, and cheat them out of their money, & out of their principles ; but he thinks it would be a piece of the greatest tyranny and the most cruel and barbarous persecution, if they should find him out, & prove him to be a *Socinian*, & as such, have him silenced, & take away his £. 100 *per annum*.—Thus this man lives, and thus he dies ; and to be sure, you will, good *Scripturista*, join with me to look upon and abhor him, as a thoro' practised knave.

For

For you grant, the *calvinistic* church had 'a right to judge for themselves, what was the true sense of scripture, and what principles were necessary, according to the holy scriptures, to be believed and professed, in order to be admitted to sealing ordinances, or to be employed as a publick instructor.' And if they had a right to do so, their doing so was no *imposition* upon *Authades*; but *Authades* was the only man guilty of *imposition*. He imposed upon the church, when he joined with it at first: he still in a higher degree imposed upon the church and congregation too, when he settled in the work of the ministry among them. He wanted their money. He obtained it first by dissimulation, and kept it thro' his whole life, by one series of deceit.

And if *calvinistic* churches in the christian world, in this corrupt age, have reason to fear, that there are too many of *Authades's* character, the very *wolves in sheep's clothing*, our Saviour warned us to *beware of*, (*Matt. vii. 15.*) can you desire, that instead of obeying the divine counsel, they should tamely resign their 'right to judge for themselves;' and admit to sealing ordinances and to the work of the ministry, any that offer, without any regard to their principles; and suffer themselves to be imposed upon in the highest degree, to the great injury of themselves, and of their posterity, only to avoid the bitter resentments of such men as *Authades*, who will cry out, *Imposition! Imposition! Persecution! Persecution!* if you only insist on your right, as christians, to know the articles of their belief, and refuse to admit them to communion & into the ministry, unless they appear to be sound in the faith? -- No, sir, you can, consistent with your own avowed principles, desire no such thing. — But rather, as Christ has made it the indispensable duty of all his followers, openly to profess the doctrines of his holy religion, (*Mat. x. 22, 32, 33.*) charged them to *beware of false prophets*, (*Mat. vii. 15.*) and commended them for trying and detecting false pretenders, (*Rev. ii. 2.*) And as even common sense teaches, that the disciples of Christ have

a natural right to know, and judge of the religious sentiments of those who claim to be their *fellow-disciples*, and expect to be treated as such ; so instead of discountenancing the little concern of *calvinistic* churches in the present day, to be consistent with your self, you, who cannot bear to be thought not a *Calvinist*, ought rather to blame their too great indifference, and call upon them to awake, stand upon their guard, and watch, lest cunning deceitful men slyly creep in, and before we are aware, bring *another gospel* into our pulpits, and the utmost confusion and discord into our churches : For how can we *walk together, except we be agreed* ? (Amos iii. 3.) Or, keep the *unity of the spirit in the bond of peace* ; except we have *one faith, one Lord, one baptism* ? (Eph. iv. 3, 4, 5.)

But perhaps you'll say, 'The *Calvinists* are too suspicious already. There are no *Arminians*, no *Arians*, no *Socinians*, &c. among us. The cry is raised by designing men, merely to answer political ends.' — Oh, my good *Scripturista* ! O that this were indeed the case ! O that our fears were quite groundless ! How soon would I believe it, if you could help me to 'see just reason for it !' — But how would the party, thro' *New-England*, laugh at our credulity in *Connecticut*, if their friends among us, could make us believe all to be safe, till they could carry their points *here*, as they have *elsewhere* ? — In *New-Hampshire* province, this party have actually, three years ago, got things so ripe, that they have ventured to new model our *shorter catechism*, to alter, or entirely leave out the *doctrines of the Trinity*, of the *decrees*, of *our first parents being created holy*, of *original sin*, *Christ's satisfying divine justice*, *effectual calling*, *justification*, *adoption*, *sanctification*, *assurance of God's love*, *perseverance in grace*, &c. and to adjust the whole to Dr. *Taylor's* scheme : And in their *preface* to this *new catechism*, they tell the world, that 'The *snarling of party-bigots* will be little regarded :' i.e. if all the *Calvinists* in the country are disobliged, to see their whole scheme given up, *they don't care*. They look upon us all as *snarling bigots*, not to be regarded,

This

This is honest.—Now they speak their hearts, and tell the world, how they feel!—Come from *New-Hampshire* along to *Boston*, and there, see a celebrated *D.D.* the head of a large party! He boldly ridicules the doctrine of the *Trinity*, and denies the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*, in the sight of all the country, in his book of sermons. — Come nearer home, come to *Wallingford*, see there, a young gentleman, bold to settle in the ministry, altho' opposed as an heretick by near half the town: Observe, and see how he conducts. How backward to let his people know his religious sentiments, while on *probation*! How resolved, never to be examined by the *consociation*, let it cost what it would, tho' charged with heresy, and cited to appear before them! Yea, altho' his opposers offer to accept him for their minister, if upon examination he should appear to be sound in the faith! And yet under these, even under these circumstances, he could find ministers to ordain him!

And how does this young gentleman conduct since his ordination? Does he convince the town that he is a sound *Calvinist*; as he might easily do, if he were? No, far from it. Yea, notwithstanding his opposers (who, before his ordination had offered to receive him for their minister, if upon examination by their consociation, he should be approved as sound in the faith) now since his ordination renew the same offer: Yea, are willing to leave it to another consociation, (viz. *Hartford South*) then convened at *Wallingford*; and if they approve him, declare they will accept him for their minister: Yet *Mr. Dana* refuses to do it. He had rather run the venture of all consequences, than be examined by them! The town may break, himself be deposed, and non-communication be declared against him and his party: But let it cost what it will, he is resolved he will not be examined by them!—But why?—He knew the consociation *must* approve him as orthodox, if he appeared to believe our confession of faith: And thus the whole controversy might have been settled in an hour or two; which now is not likely to be settled these many years. And he knew it

was no matter whether the consociation had jurisdiction or not, if both he and his opposers could have agreed to submit the affair to them. But he was resolved not to do it : And why all this, if he was a sound believer, I can't conceive. \*

Nor is this all : For he has since these things even introduced a *new method of taking persons into full communion with the church*. A method, which however suited to the *latitudinarian* scheme, yet is intirely subversive of the very foundation on which all our churches in *New-England* were originally settled. To be sure, it appears so to me ; and because I would fain know your opinion of it, I will relate the case, and state *three questions* for you to answer, in your next letter to your friend *Paulinus*. The case is this ; The first church in *Wallingford*, under the Rev. Mr. *Street* their first minister, were formed a *calvinistic* church. The *doctrines of faith*, which they drew up, to be used in the admission of members, were strictly calvinistic. This form has been used in that church ever since, in the admission of members. Their former ministers, having publickly read it before all the congregation, used to say to the persons to be admitted, *These articles of the christian faith you give your assent unto*. Instead of which, Mr. *Dana*, their present minister (if he may be so called after deposition) says, *These articles of the christian faith you give your assent unto, so far as you think them agreeable to the word of God*. — My *three questions* are these.

QUEST. I. Does Mr. *Dana*, or his church, by such a profession as above, know what principles persons pretend to be of, whom they thus admit to special ordinances ? Can they by such a profession know, whether they mean to be *Papists*, or *Protestants*, *Socinians*, *Arians*, *Pelagians*, *Arminians*, or *Antinomians* ? If they can, pray tell me how ? For all these different denominations *believe*, and may *profess to believe*, these calvinistic articles of faith, *so far as they think them to be agreeable to the word of God*. But

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\* For the facts above, the reader is referred to Mr. *Eell's* *Remarks*, &c.

But if, by this profession, you grant Mr. *Dana* and his church cannot form any proper judgment of the principles of those, who are thus admitted, whether they are *Papists*, or *Protestants*, *Socinians*, *Arians*, &c. I would inquire,

QUEST. II. Are *Papists*, *Socinians*, *Arians*, &c. all of them orthodox enough to be admitted to sealing ordinances? If not—

QUEST. III. How can Mr. *Dana's* conduct, in this affair, be vindicated, who receives members upon a profession, which any heretick in the christian world can make, and still retain all his errors?

Will it do, to say, in his excuse? 'That some of his church are attached to the *calvinistic* scheme, in which they have been educated; and will be offended, if he lays aside their *old doctrines of faith*, and makes a *new creed*, of a different stamp: And perhaps they may leave him, and join with those who have already rejected him. If he should discover his peculiar principles so plainly, perhaps he would soon have but few hearers. And so this will not do. *And'tis right, to dissemble a little, in so good a cause.* And besides, if he himself does not believe *their doctrines of faith*, it is a hardship, to oblige him to lead his people, from time to time, to profess, in the most publick and solemn manner, their belief of them; and to keep back such from special ordinances, who scruple to make such a profession. To prevent all which difficulties, he first reads over *their old doctrines of faith*, for a *blind* to the *calvinist* part of his church; and then he expresses himself so as to leave those whom he admits, at full liberty, to believe what they please, and yet be quite orthodox enough at the same time, to be admitted into the church of Christ, as his true and faithful followers.'—But if this be the case, does not one of our *former questions* need to be reconsidered, *viz.* 'Is it of any importance, what men's principles be, if their lives are but good?—For if indeed it is of no importance, and if *pious frauds* are justifiable, then we may all do as Mr. *Dana* does. But if it is of importance,

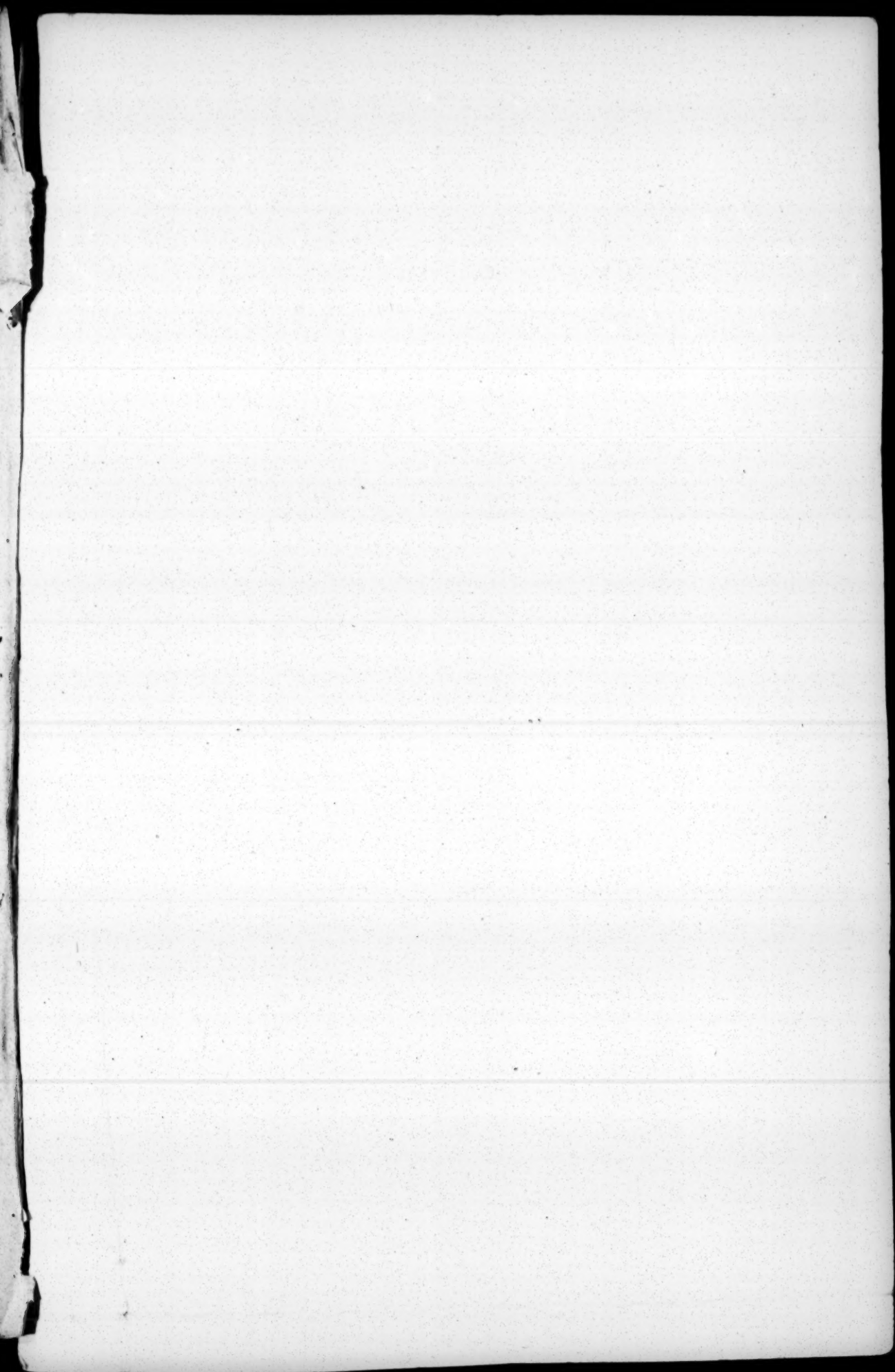
*tance*, and if we must not dissemble, how can his conduct be justified? Or, how can any orthodox church in *New-England* safely receive members, by vertue of a recommendation from his church, as being sound in the faith, when it is not known what their faith is?

A speedy and full answer to these *questions* will greatly oblige,

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and very humble servant,*

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